

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 963
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMCONSUL TORONTO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 QUEBEC 0158

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BGEN, SCUL, CA
SUBJECT: LEVESQUE TO CONSIDER LANGUAGE MODIFICATIONS AFTER STRONG
REACTION TO WHITE PAPER

REF: A. QUEBEC 0143 B. QUEBEC 0148

1. SUMMARY: AFTER 2 WEEKS OF VERY EMOTIONAL, PROVINCE-WIDE
DEBATE OVER PQ LANGUAGE PROPOSALS PUBLISHED ON APRIL 1,
PREMIER LEVESQUE ANNOUNCED APRIL 13 THAT HE WAS WILLING TO CONSIDER
SOME MODIFICATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL SECTION OF PROPOSALS. LEVESQUE
SAID POLICY ON EDUCATION SHOULD BE REVIEWED IN LIGHT OF QUEBEC'S
DESIRE TO ESTABLISH NEW ASSOCIATION WITH CANADA AFTER INDEPEND-
ENCE. HIS REMARKS MAY REOPEN SPLIT IN CABINET OVER LANGUAGE
PROPOSALS, ESPECIALLY AFTER CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER
CAMILLE LAURIN HAD PROMISED ONLY MINOR CHANGES DURING TOUR
OF PROVINCE. PROPOSALS UPSET ANGLOPHONES, IMMIGRANT GROUPS, AND
SOME FRANCOPHONES WHO FEAR QUEBECOIS WILL LOSE ABILITY TO SPEAK
ENGLISH. THESE ELEMENTS ALSO FEAR LOSS OF ECONOMIC POWER AND
MANY ARE REPORTEDLY PREPARING LEAVE QUEBEC. GOQ BELIEVES EXODUS
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REPORTS EXAGGERATED BUT ALSO CONSIDERS ANY EXODUS PRICE QUEBEC
MUST PAY TO BECOME MASTER IN ITS OWN HOUSE. QUEBEC BUSINESS
ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ATTACKED PROPOSED LANGUAGE LEGISLATION AS
DISCRIMINATORY, BUT QUEBEC'S LABOR MOVEMENT HAS WARMLY
ENDORSED IT AS HAVE MOST FRANCOPHONE CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS.
ANGLO-FRENCH SPLIT HAS REACHED INTO UNION NATIONALE WHERE
BIRON'S WARM SUPPORT OF PQ PAPER IS UNDER FIRE FROM DEPUTIES WHOSE

CONSTITUENCIES CONTAIN MANY ANGLOPHONES. PERSPECTIVE OF REPORTING ON PROPOSALS AND CONSEQUENT DEBATE IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH PAPERS WAS QUITE DIFFERENT. AMONG ENGLISH EMOTIONS RAN HIGH, BUT FRENCH WERE MORE DETAILED AND PHILOSOPHICAL. AFTER CONVERSATION WITH SEVERAL MINISTERS, IT APPEARS GOQ MAY CONSIDER SOME MODIFICATIONS IF IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE ACQUIESCING TO ANGLOPHONE PRESSURE. END SUMMARY.

2. RENE LEVESQUE ANNOUNCED APRIL 13 THAT HE WAS WILLING TO CONSIDER SOME MODIFICATIONS IN PQ LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATIONAL FIELD. HE INDICATED THAT ONE OF MOST CONTROVERSIAL ASPECTS OF POLICY, WHEREBY PROVINCIAL ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM WOULD BE CLOSED TO CANADIANS FROM OTHER PROVINCES, MAY NOT BE INCLUDED IN FINAL DRAFT OF THE NEW LANGUAGE LEGISLATION. PREMIER, CALLING FORMULATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY A VERY DIFFICULT PROCESS FOR HIM, SAID GOVERNMENT WOULD HOLD HEARINGS WITH OPEN MIND AND EXPRESSED HOPE ANGLOPHONES WOULD HAVE EQUALLY OPEN ATTITUDE. WHILE NOTING THAT CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER LAURIN HAD SAID THAT GOQ NOT PREPARED CHANGE PROPOSALS, PREMIER SAID POLICY HAS TO BE REVIEWED IN LIGHT OF QUEBEC'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH A NEW ASSOCIATION

WITH CANADA IN THE EVENT OF INDEPENDENCE. WHILE DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION (FRENCH PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN DECLINE WHILE ENGLISH SECTOR IS HOLDING STEADY) LED TO DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY EXPRESSED IN WHITE PAPER, LEVESQUE NOTED THAT POLITICAL ASPECTS (NEED FOR ASSOCIATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE) MILITATE IN FAVOR OF CONSIDERING CANADA-WIDE DIMENSION. (COMMENT: LEVESQUE HAS BEEN A MODERATE ON LANGUAGE ISSUE AND APPARENTLY LOST POLICY BATTLE WITH HARD-LINERS IN CABINET LED BY LAURIN WHICH PRECEDED WHITE PAPER. CONFIDENTIAL

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BY REOPENING STRUGGLE IN THIS MANNER, HE COULD LEAVE HIMSELF OPEN TO SERIOUS OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN PQ.)

3. LEVESQUE'S REMARKS CAME AFTER AN EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE DEBATE HAD RAGED ACROSS PROVINCE FOR TWO WEEKS FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF WHITE PAPER ON APRIL 1 (REFTEL A). FUELED BY EXTENSIVE ACADEMIC ANALYSIS OF PROPOSALS IN PAPERS, CLIMATE OF FEAR (OR AT LEAST CONFUSION) HAS INFECTED MANY ANGLOPHONES, SOME NEO-CANADIAN IMMIGRANT GROUPS, AND A NUMBER OF CONSERVATIVE FRANCOPHONE BUSINESSMEN. ANGLOPHONES ARE OBVIOUSLY REACTING TO WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE A LOSS OF ENSHRINED RIGHTS. MOST FRANCOPHONES--ON THE OTHER HAND--ACCEPT GOVERNMENTS CONTENTION THAT ANGLOS HAVE LONG ENJOYED PRIVILEGED ECONOMIC STATUS AND THE POWER IT PORTENDS. MANY ANGLOPHONES APPEAR TO BE CONSIDERING LEAVING PROVINCE. MACLEAN RAN COVER STORY LAST WEEK ON EXODUS OF ANGLO QUEBECERS. WHILE THEIR REACTION SEEMS EXAGGERATED TO EMOTIONALLY DETACHED OBSERVER, IT MUST COMMAND SOME SYMPATHY ON HUMAN LEVEL. BEHIND IT ALSO LOOMS FEAR OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC

PROGRAMS IN PQ PLATFORM AS WELL AS DOMINO-LIKE FEAR THAT REMAINING PRIVILEGES COULD EVENTUALLY BE LIFTED. IMMIGRANTS ARE ALSO IN A QUANDRY. INITIAL REACTION OF RELIEF THAT NO MORE LANGUAGE TESTS WOULD BE GIVEN HAS YIELDED TO FEAR THAT LANGUAGE PROPOSAL ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES MIGHT LEND THEMSELVES TO AUTHORITARIAN APPLICATION THEY RECALL FROM EUROPE.

4. WHILE BULK OF FRANCOPHONES SUPPORT LANGUAGE PROPOSALS, SOME THOUGHTFUL FRANCOPHONE LEADERS FEAR THEIR MAIN VICTIMS COULD BE QUEBECOIS THEMSELVES. THEY FEAR BILL MIGHT EVENTUALLY CREATE A

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 QUEBEC 0158

SMALL, ETHNO-CENTRIC FRENCH SPEAKING SOCIETY ISOLATED BY ITS UNILINGUALISM FROM THEIR NEIGHBORS IN AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING CONTINENT. BUSINESS WOULD BE RUN BY QUEBECERS BUT IT WOULD BE ON A VASTLY REDUCED SCALE PRIMARILY LIMITED TO SERVICING NEEDS WITHIN QUEBEC'S BORDERS. FRENCH-SPEAKING QUEBECERS WOULD BE LIMITED BY THEIR UNILINGUALISM TO WORKING IN QUEBEC AND PRECLUDED FROM EASILY EXPANDING THEIR EDUCATION OR EXPERIENCE ABROAD. THERE IS INCREASING TALK IN QUEBEC CITY THAT SUCH FRANCOPHONES MAY BE PLANNING TO LEAVE QUEBEC AS FAST AS ANGLOPHONES. GOQ SUPPORTERS ACKNOWLEDGE DANGERS OF ANGLOPHONE AND SOME FRANCOPHONE EXODUS. THEY GENERALLY DOUBT THAT IT IS AS SERIOUS A PROBLEM AS IS DESCRIBED IN PRESS. AT ANY RATE, THEY GENERALLY SAY THAT QUEBEC IS PREPARED TO PAY THE PRICE AS AN UNAVOIDABLE PART OF QUEBECOIS MOVE TO BECOME

"MASTERS IN THEIR OWN HOUSE." LEVESQUE'S REMARKS WEDNESDAY MAY INDICATE

THAT BITTERNESS AND INTENSITY OF REACTION IN LAST TWO WEEKS HAS
CONVINCED PREMIER THAT PRICE WOULD INDEED BE HIGH.

5. PARTI QUEBECOIS LEADERS KNEW THAT REACTION TO PUBLISHING OF
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WHITE PAPER WOULD BE LOUD AND INTENSE SO THEY ARRANGED FOR CULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT MINISTER CAMILLE LAURIN TO MAKE A TOUR OF THE PROVINCE
TO EXPLAIN PQ LANGUAGE PROPOSALS. AFTER HEARING SOME UNFAVOR-
ABLE REACTION FROM ANGLOPHONES, HE LET IT BE KNOWN PQ WAS DISPOSED
TO MODIFY SOME MINOR POINTS IN THE PROPOSALS. IT WAS THIS STATEMENT
LEVESQUE CHANGED WEDNESDAY. LAURIN SPECIFICALLY ANNOUNCED THAT
PQ DID NOT REALLY INTEND TO CHANGE ALL ENGLISH PLACE-NAMES INTO
FRENCH. BLAMING EARLY REPORTS IN ENGLISH PRESS ON AN ERROR IN
TRANSLATION, LAURIN SAID WHAT PQ MEANT WAS THAT NAMES WOULD BE
CHANGED WHERE CONVENIENT. IN ADDITION TO EXPECTED OPPOSITION FROM
SMALL ANGLOPHONE COMMUNITIES IN HULL, TROIS RIVIERES, CHICOUTIMI,
RIMOUSKI AND SHERBROOKE, LAURIN RECEIVED HARSH QUESTIONING FROM
SOME LOCAL FRANCOPHONE OFFICIALS AND BUSINESSMEN IN ECONOMICALLY
DEPRESSED AREAS WHO FEARED QUEBECOIS WOULD LOSE THEIR BILINGUAL
CAPACITIES WITH NEW PROPOSALS AND THAT LANGUAGE POLICY WOULD
ADVERSELY AFFECT QUEBEC ECONOMY. ACCORDING TO JOURNALISTS ACCOMPANYING

THE MINISTER, HE WAS MORE TOLERANT OF "MISGUIDED ANGLOPHONE QUESTION-
ERS" THAN OF HIS FELLOW FRANCOPHONES. HE REFUSED TO BEND BEFORE LATTER.

HIS TASK WAS MADE EASIER BY FACT THAT MEETINGS WERE HELD
UNDER AUSPICES OF LOCAL PQ ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CONTROLLED
INVITATIONS. WHILE REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY
WERE INVITED, MAJORITY WAS PQ AND STRONGLY SUPPORTED LAURIN'S
PRESENTATIONS.

6. WHILE LAURIN WAS ON TOUR, SEVERAL BUSINESS GROUPS RAPPED THE
PQ LANGUAGE PROPOSALS WHICH HE DRAFTED. JEAN BRUNELLE, DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF THE CENTRE DE DIRIGEANTS D'ENTREPRISE SAID PROPOSED
POLICY WILL NOT HELP FRANCOPHONE AMBITIONS TO FILL HIGH EXECUTIVE
POSITIONS BECAUSE IT WILL SCARE OFF CURRENT AND FUTURE INVESTMENT.
HE SAID PROPOSALS WILL CAUSE A NUMBER OF EXISTING OPENINGS
TO DISAPPEAR RATHER THAN OPENING UP NEW MANAGEMENT POSITIONS
FOR FRENCH SPEAKING EXECUTIVES. PIERRE DES MARAIS, PRESIDENT
FO THE "CONSEIL DU PATRONAT DU QUEBEC" CALLED SEVERAL PROPOSALS
IN WHITE PAPER "UNACCEPTABLE, DISCRIMINATORY, OR UNREALISTIC."
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HE TOLD PRESS CONFERENCE THAT NOT ONLY WOULD LANGUAGE WHITE PAPER REKINDLE THE DEBATE OVER LANGUAGE ISSUE BUT IT WOULD EVEN WORK AGAINST THE PROMOTION OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AND THE INTERESTS OF FRANCOPHONES. CONSEIL OFFICIALS ANNOUNCED THEIR MEMBERS WERE VERY UPSET BY LANGUAGE PROPOSALS AND CHALLENGED PQ'S MANDATE TO IMPOSE THESE PROPOSALS ON PROVINCE. LAURIN REACTED BITTERLY AGAINST BUSINESS CRITICISM. HE CALLED BUSINESSES ASSOCIATIONS REPRESENTATIVES OF LACKEY KINGS WHO PLACE THEIR OWN (AND THOSE OF THEIR PATRONS) INTERESTS BEFORE THOSE OF FRANCOPHONE MAJORITY. HE SAID THAT HE HAD CONSULTED BUSINESSMEN BEFORE WRITING FRENCH LANGUAGE PAPER AND HAD INCORPORATED MOST OF THEIR IDEAS IN IT. IN GENERAL, SMALL QUEBEC BASED COMPANIES ARE MUCH MORE NERVOUS ABOUT PROPOSALS THAN LARGE MULTINATIONALS.

7. LAURIN RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM QUEBEC'S LABOR UNION CENTRALS AND THE NATIONALIST MOUVEMENT QUEBEC FRANCAIS. MQF SAID WHITE PAPER GIVES HOPE FOR SURVIVAL OF FRENCH IN QUEBEC. HOWEVER, IT NOTED THAT LANGUAGE PROPOSALS WERE WORDED MORE WEAKLY THAN IT WOULD HAVE LIKED AND ANNOUNCED IT WILL PRESS GOQ NOT TO CEDE ANY BENEFITS TO ANGLOPHONES IN ACTUAL LEGISLATION DUE AT THE END OF APRIL. THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR ENDORSED GOQ LANGUAGE POLICY, SAYING IT EXEMPLIFIES GOALS OF THAT LABOR BODY DURING PAST DECADES. DIRECTOR GENERAL FERNAND DAOUST SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IS THAT MAJORITY OF QUEBEC WORKERS WILL NOW BE ABLE TO EARN THEIR LIVING IN FRENCH WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION. QFL HAD PARTICULAR PRAISE FOR GOVERNMENT PLANS TO SET UP FRANCIZATION COMMITTEES WITH EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION IN COMPANIES EMPLOYING MORE THAN 100 WORKERS. CONFEDERATION OF NATIONAL TRADE UNION AND CENTRALE D'ENSEIGNEMENTS DU QUEBEC SPOKESMEN ALSO PRAISED GENERAL TONE OF PROPOSALS ALTHOUGH MANY OF THEIR LEADERS WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT IT WERE EVEN TOUGHER.

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8. POLITICAL REACTION TO PROPOSALS WAS REPORTED IN REFTEL B.

IT NOW APPEARS THAT PROPOSALS HAVE GENERATED A PARTICULAR TURBULENCE WITHIN THE UNION NATIONAL PARTY. ANGLOPHONES IN THE PARTY HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN PAPERS TO BE VERY INSISTANT AND AGGRESSIVE IN ARGUING TO RETURN UN TO ITS LATE 1960'S POLICY OF FREE CHOICE FOR PARENTS CONCERNING LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION. WILLIAM SHAW, UNILINGUAL ANGLOPHONE DEPUTY FROM THE POINT-CLAIRE WEST ISLAND CONSTITUENCY IS LEADING THE FIGHT AND HAS BEEN JOINED BY FIVE OTHER DEPUTIES FROM EASTERN TOWNSHIPS WHO HAVE SIZEABLE ANGLOPHONE MINORITIES IN THEIR RIDINGS. NATIONALIST WING OF PARTY (OTHER 4 DEPUTIES AND MOST OF PARTY STRUCTURE) WILL NO DOUBT BLOCK THIS ANGLOPHONE-LED OFFENSIVE. BUT SHAW MAY SUCCEED IN BACKING BIRON AWAY FROM HIS WARM SUPPORT OF MUCH OF PQ LANGUAGE WHITE PAPER.

9. BOTH FRENCH AND ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS GAVE MASSIVE COVERAGE TO 109 PAGE WHITE PAPER AND TO REACTION IT AROUSED INSIDE AND OUTSIDE QUEBEC. HOWEVER, THE PRESPECTIVE OF REPORTERS WAS QUITE DIFFERENT. WHILE ANGLOPHONE REPORTERS WROTE OF THE SLOW STRANGULATION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE ENGLISH COMMUNITY, FRANCOPHONE REPORTERS REFERRED TO LEVESQUE'S FIERCE RESPECT FOR MINORITY RIGHTS AND THE WHITE PAPER'S GOAL OF "ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINORITIES." ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO CONSENSUS AMONG FRENCH LANGUAGE EDITORIALISTS, THEIR VIEWS WERE MORE DETACHED AND PHILOSOPHICAL THAN IN THE ENGLISH PRESS WHERE EMOTIONS RAN HIGH. SOME FRANCOPHONE REPORTERS WERE INDIGNANT THAT THE ENGLISH PRESS WOULD FLOOD ITS PAGES WITH BITTER COMPLAINTS AND OBJECTIONS TO THE WHITE PAPER. ONE LA PRESSE REPORTER WROTE THAT ANGLOPHONE MINORITY IN QUEBEC HAD MORE RIGHTS THAN ANY COMPARABLE MINORITY IN THE WORLD. FRENCH PRESS EDITORIALISTS DID FIND FLAWS IN WHITE PAPER. MANY REGRETTED ARRIVAL OF YET ANOTHER DIVISIVE LANGUAGE DEBATE AND FEARED QUEBECOIS WOULD BECOME UNILINGUAL AND ISOLATED. CLAUDE RYAN, TAKING FIERCELY INDEPENDENT LINE, WROTE IN LE DEVOIR THAT WHITE PAPER'S DIAGNOSIS OF THE HEALTH AND FUTURE OF FRENCH LANGUAGE IS EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC, SO BLACK THAT IT HARDLY BEARS ANY RESEMBLANCE TO REALITY. RYAN DOUBTED PQ WILL CONTINUE FOR LONG TO GIVE ANGLOPHONES ALL OF BENEFITS THEY PROMISE IN WHITE PAPER. IN LA PRESS, MARCEL ADAM SAID A BETTER SOLUTION THAN LEGISLATING AGAINST INFLUENCES OF ENGLISH MINORITY WOULD BE TO MAKE FRENCH MAJORITY AN ATTRACTIVE AND POWERFUL FORCE. OTHER LA PRESSE WRITERS, HOWEVER, JOINED EDITORS OF LE SOLEIL

OF QUEBEC CITY AND OTHER MASS-CIRCULATION PAPERS ACROSS PROVINCE
IN GENERAL SUPPORT OF PQ GOALS WHILE DISPUTING SOME MEANS.
IN GENERAL, THEY WROTE THAT WHITE PAPER PROPOSALS WERE NECESSARY
IF QUEBEC--ISOLATED IN NORTH AMERICAN SEE--WERE TO BECOME ATTRACTIVE
AND POWERFUL FORCE OF WHICH ADAM WROTE.

10. COMMENT: JACQUE IVAN MORIN IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH
ME YESTERDAY CONFIRMED THAT CABINET IS DIVIDED ON DETAILS
OF LANGUAGE POLICY. HE CLAIMED MANY CRITICS FORGET FRANCOPHONE
DEMONSTRATIONS IN 1968 AGAINST GOVERNMENT DECISION TO ACCORD
PARENTS FREE CHOICE IN CHOOSING THEIR CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE OF
INSTRUCTION. PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS HAD TO TAKE THIS POTENTIAL
VOLITILITY INTO ACCOUNT. IT HAS ATTEMPTED FIND MIDDLE GROUND
WHICH RECOGNIZES FRENCH AS PREDOMINANT WHILE GRANTING MAXIMUM POLITI-
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CALLY FEASIBLE PROTECTION TO MINORITY RIGHTS. HE ASSERTED
THAT "SOME OF BEST FRIENDS ANGLOPHONES HAVE ARE IN CABINET."
HOPEFULLY, THEY WILL NOT UNDERMINE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO GAIN
GUARANTEES FOR ANGLOPHONE RIGHTS BY AN "EXAGGERATED PROTEST."
SURPRISINGLY, CLAUD CHARRON, WHO IS USUALLY AMONG MOST MILITANT
FRANCOPHONES IN CABINET, TOLD ME GOQ WISHES SETTLE LANGUAGE
QUESTION "FOR ALL TIME," AND IS WILLING "BEND OVER BACKWARDS"
TO BE FAIR TO ANGLOPHONES AS LONG AS THERE IS NO CHALLENGE TO
PRINCIPLE OF FRENCH PREDOMINANCE. WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC, HE
SAID HE WOULD SUPPORT CHANGES IN POSITIONS TAKEN IN WHITE PAPER.
THUS,IT APPEARS GOQ MAY BE READY MAKE FURTHER MODIFICATIONS
IN LANGUAGE POLICY AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE
ACQUIESCING TO ANGLOPHONE PRESSURES. DANGER OF ACTIVATING
FANATICS IS ALWAYS PRESENT WHEN DEALING WITH SUCH HIGHLY
EMOTIVE ISSUES. MCNAMARA

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